Archie
ADVENTURE SERIES
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SEGA®
KNUCKLES™
THE ECHIDNA
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
PENDERS • SPAZIANTE • GALAN
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SPAZ PENDERS

KNUCKLES

Book Eleven

The Forgotten Tribe

Part Two of Three

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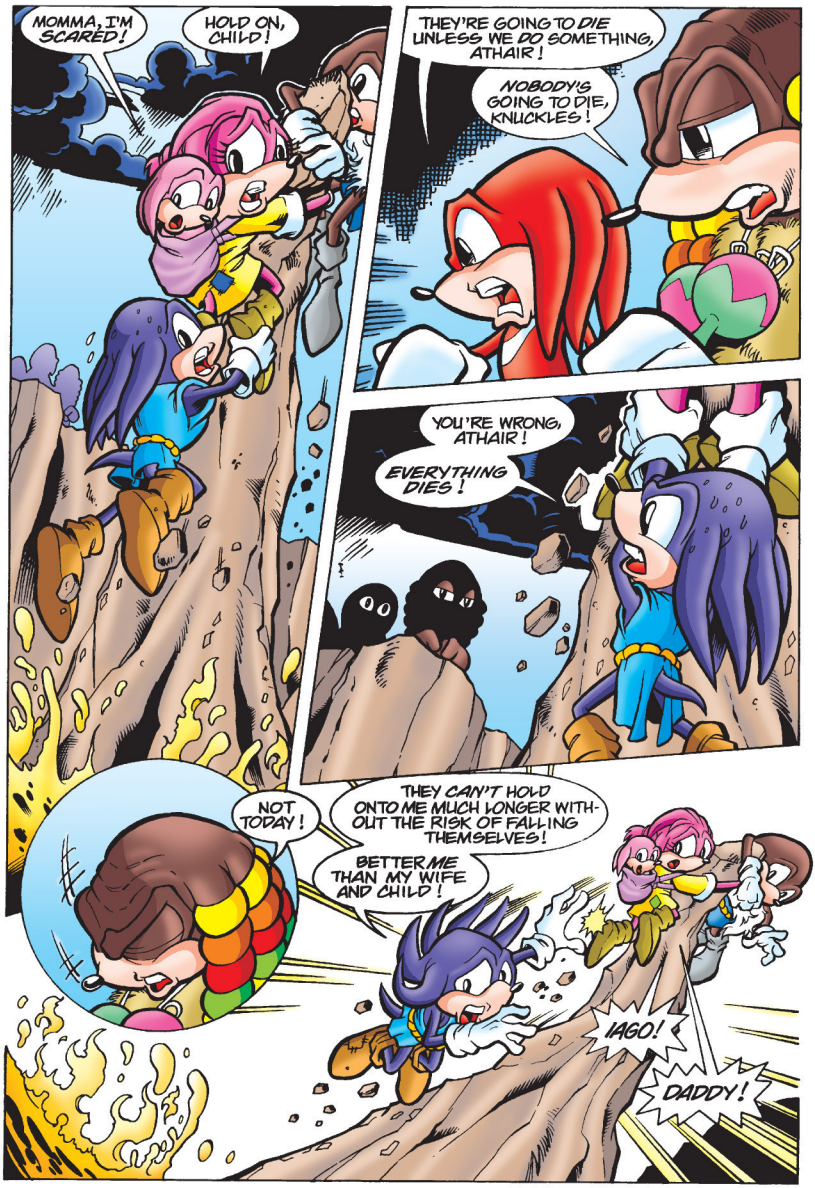
Born to the most noble of Echidna houses, the latest to continue the family heritage and responsibility as guardian of the floating island, defender of all from the forces of evil from the world beyond as well as those who would threaten within, he is none other than Knuckles the Echidna!

Centuries ago, the Echidna civilization faced annihilation in the form of a collision course with a comet. They had but two choices: utilize the technology they were dependent upon to save themselves or abandon the city they inhabited and resettle elsewhere.

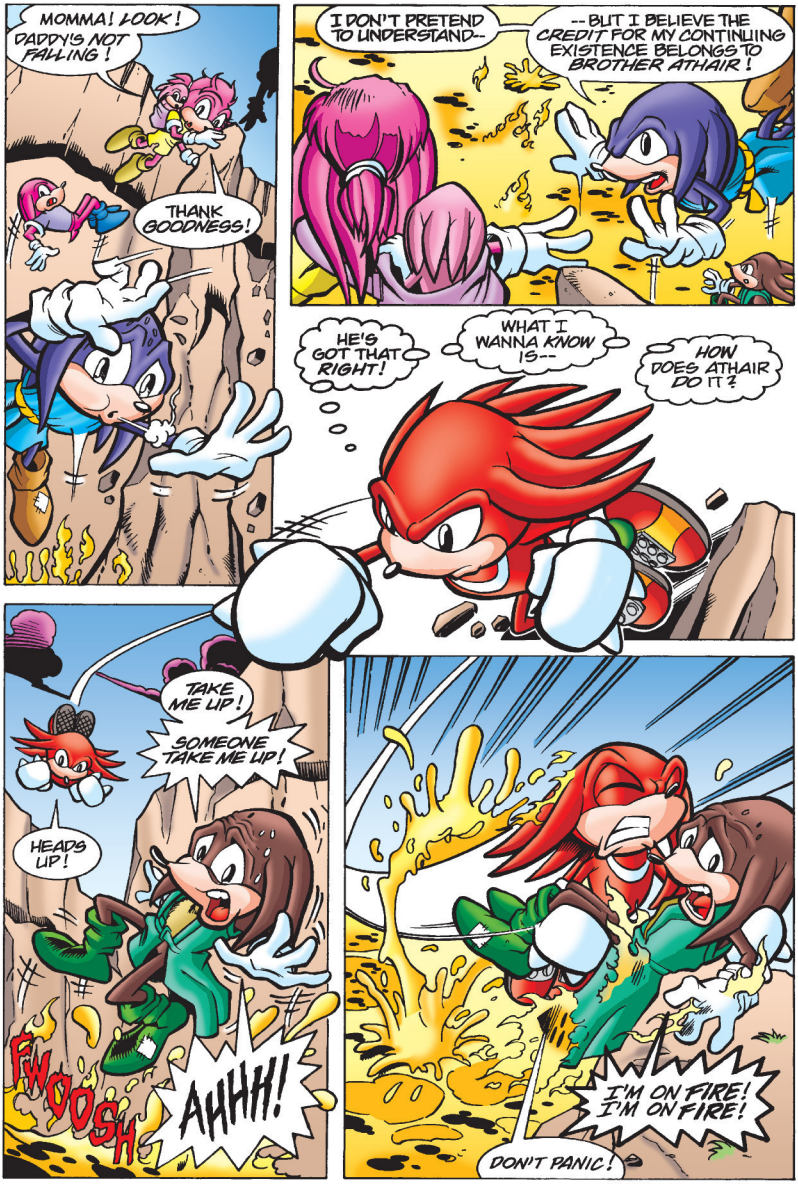
For the overwhelming majority, the choice was simple, as they embraced the technological solution that carried their island homeward into the upper atmosphere.

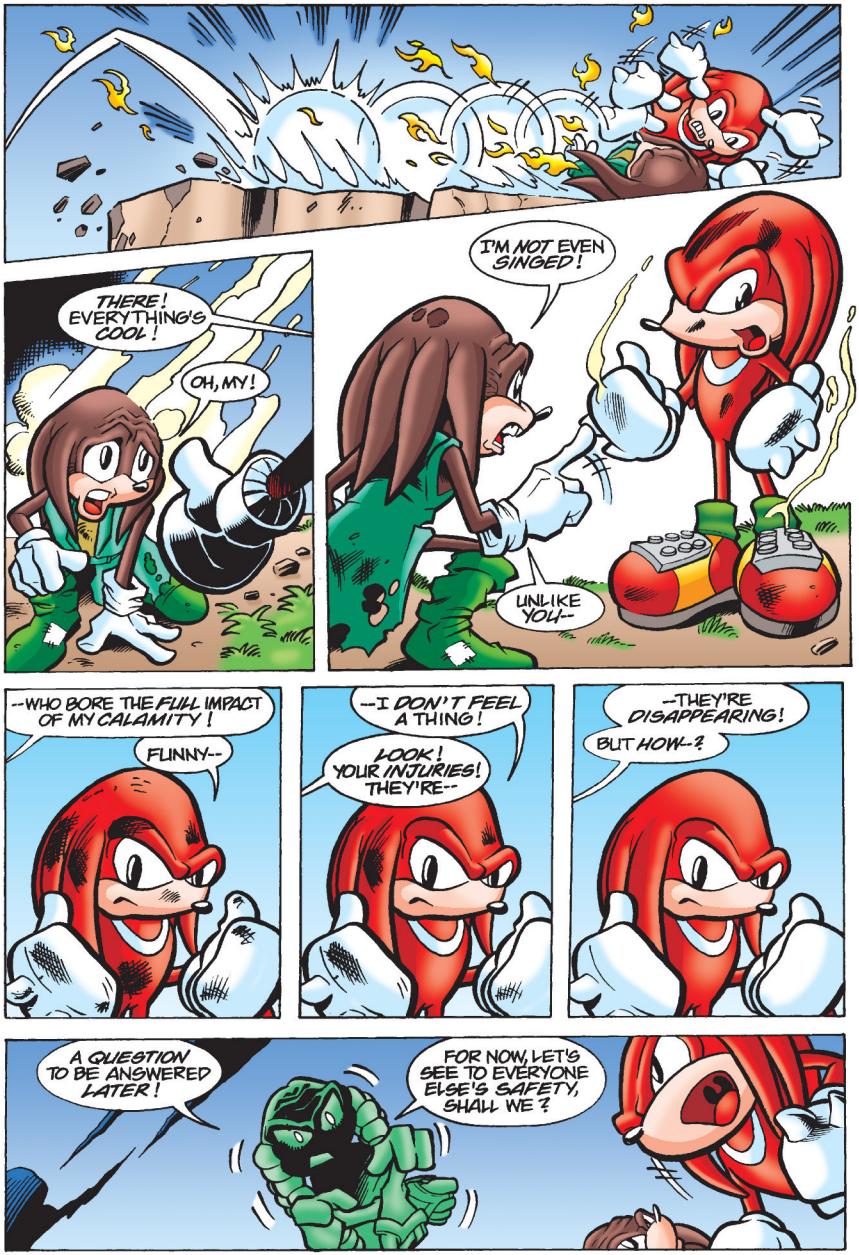
Lost in the pages of history until now, however, was a band of brave souls who followed an Echidna of conscience in search of a new homeland on the ground upon which they had grown and prospered.

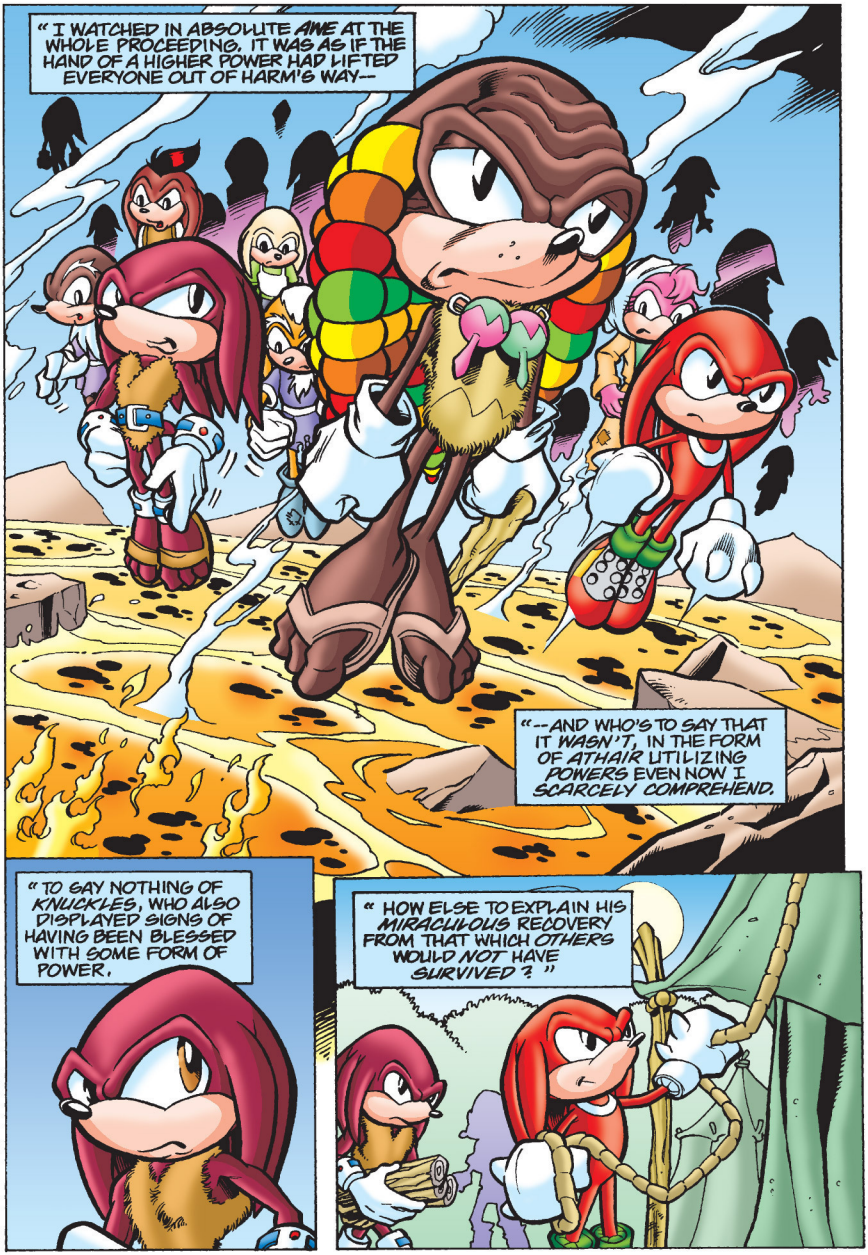
It is with their present-day descendants that we find Knuckles, trying to figure out his next course of action in regards to his kindred Echidna...

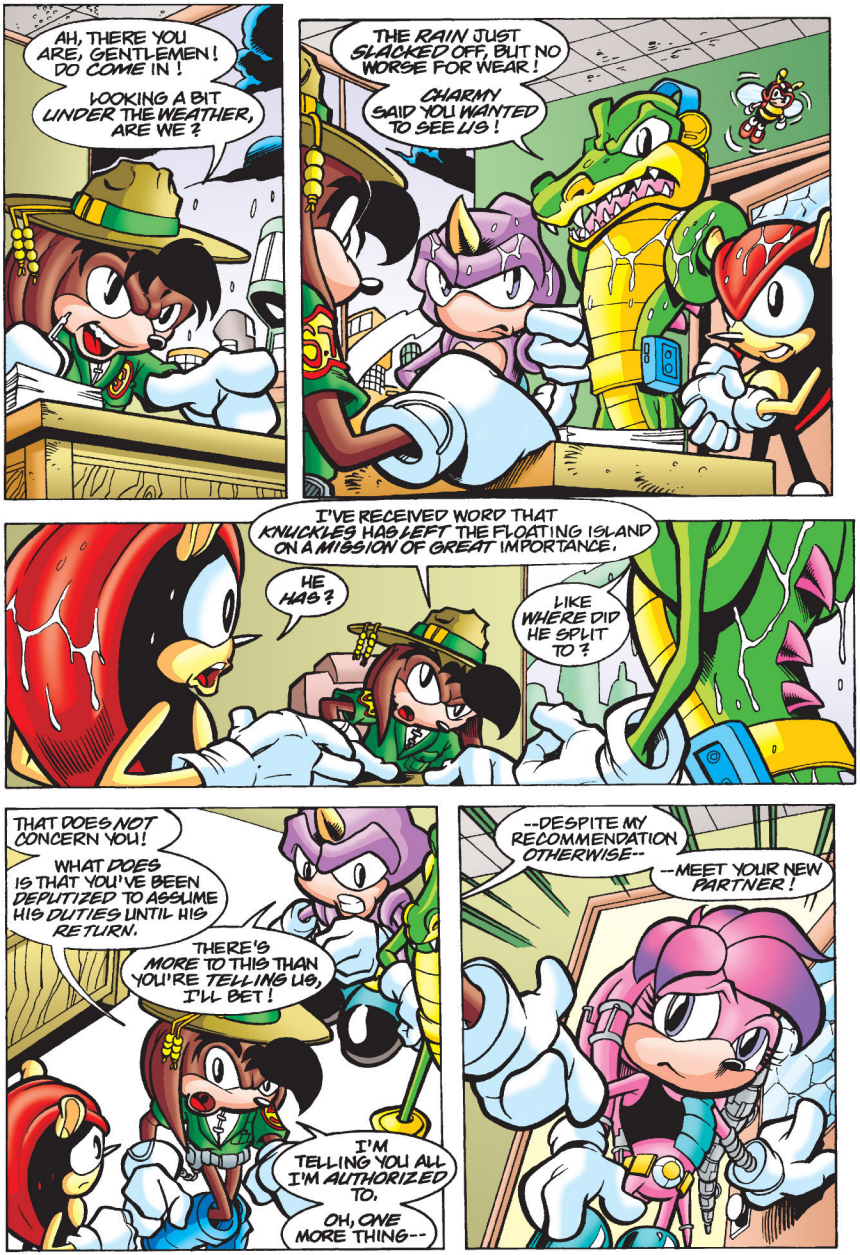

MOMMA, I'M SCARED!
HOLD ON, CHILD!
THEY'RE GOING TO DIE UNLESS WE DO SOMETHING, ATHAIR!
NOBODY'S GOING TO DIE, KNUCKLES!
YOU'RE WRONG, ATHAIR!
EVERYTHING DIES!
NOT TODAY!
THEY CAN'T HOLD ONTO ME MUCH LONGER WITHOUT THE RISK OF FALLING THEMSELVES!
BETTER ME THAN MY WIFE AND CHILD!
IAGO!
DADDY!

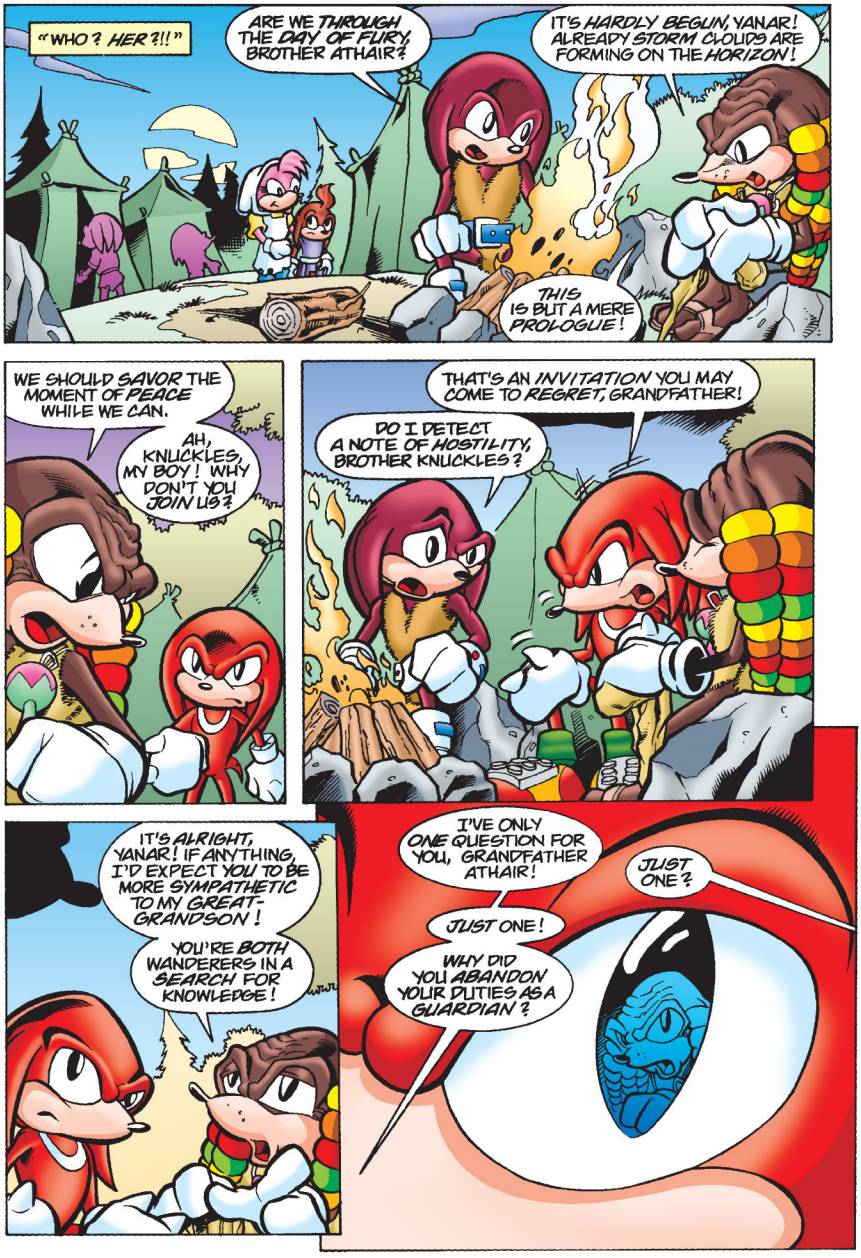
NOT TODAY!
NOBODY DIES TODAY!
KNUCKLES IN
Covenant

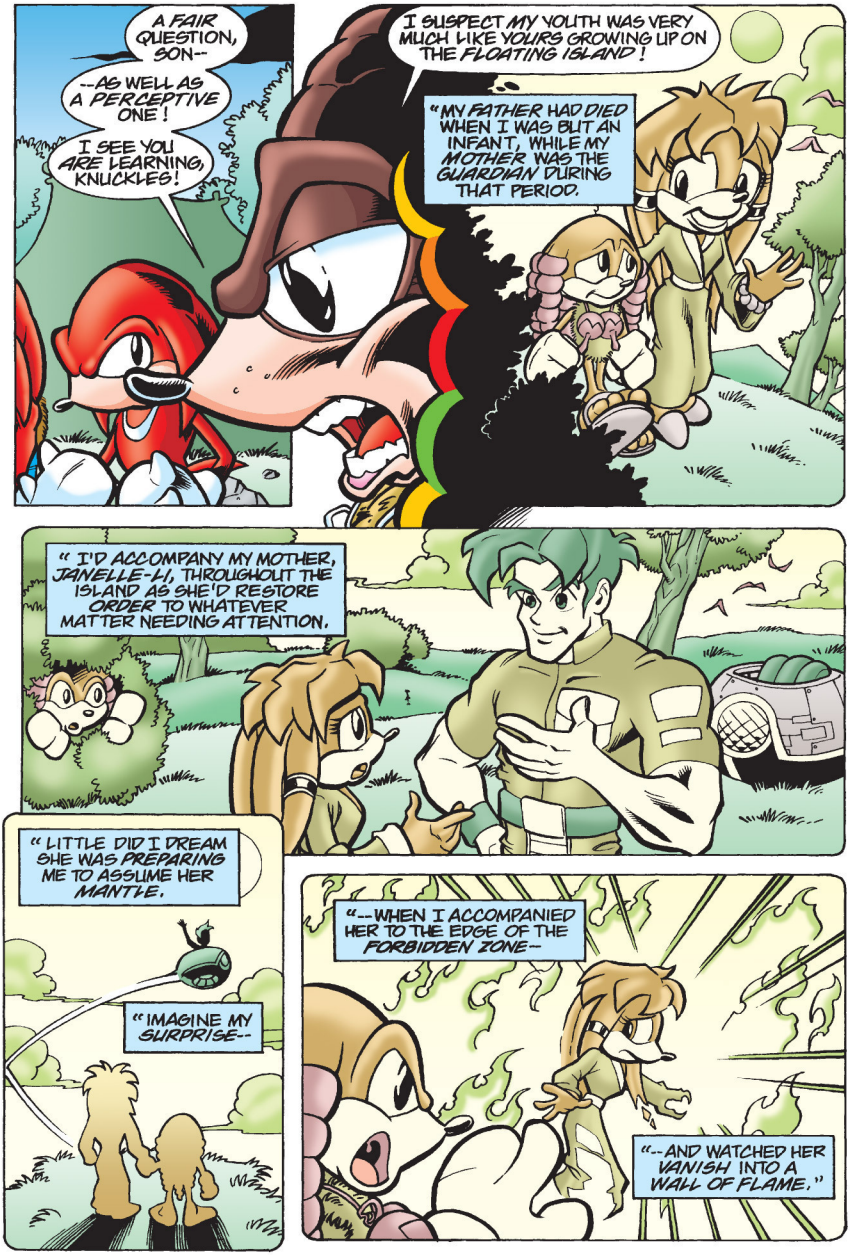

MOMMA! LOOK! DADDY'S NOT FALLING!
THANK GOODNESS!
I DON'T PRETEND TO UNDERSTAND--
--BUT I BELIEVE THE CREDIT FOR MY CONTINUING EXISTENCE BELONGS TO BROTHER ATHAIR!
HE'S GOT THAT RIGHT!
WHAT I WANNA KNOW IS---
HOW DOES ATHAIR DO IT?
TAKE ME UP!
SOMEONE TAKE ME UP!
HEADS UP!
FWOOSH
AHHH!
I'M ON FIRE! I'M ON FIRE!
DON'T PANIC!

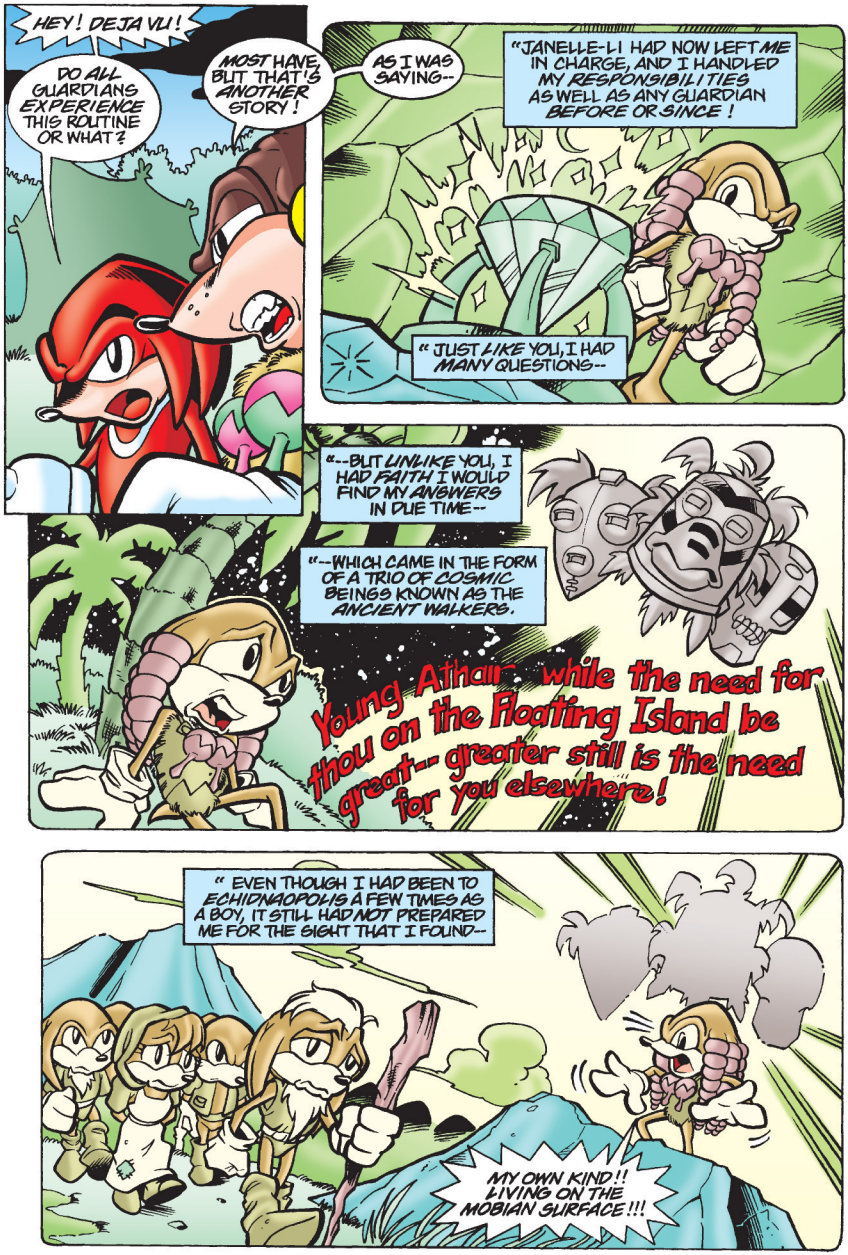

THERE! EVERYTHING'S COOL!
OH, MY!
I'M NOT EVEN SINGED!
UNLIKE YOU--
--WHO BORE THE FULL IMPACT OF MY CALAMITY!
FUNNY--
--I DON'T FEEL A THING!
LOOK! YOUR INJURIES! THEY'RE--
--THEY'RE DISAPPEARING!
BUT HOW--?
A QUESTION TO BE ANSWERED LATER!
FOR NOW, LET'S SEE TO EVERYONE ELSE'S SAFETY, SHALL WE?

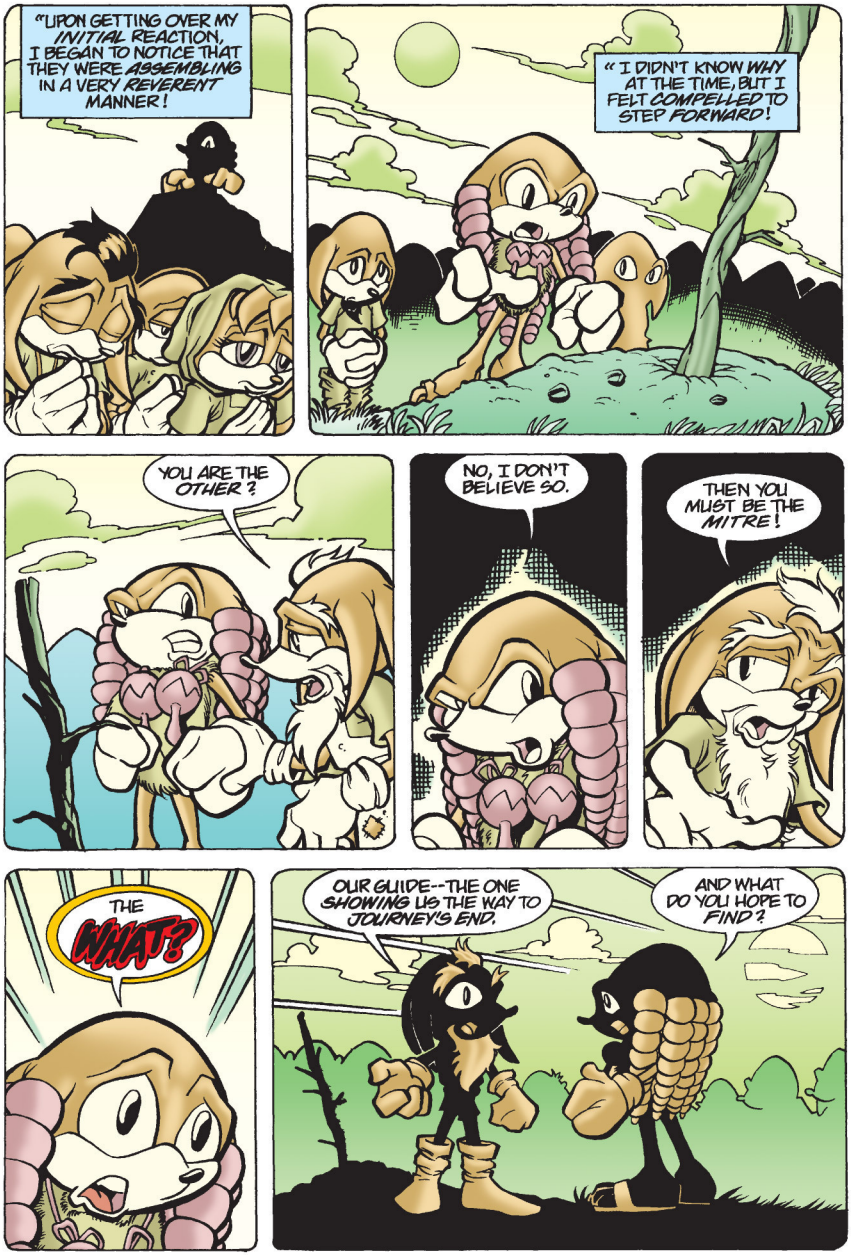

" I WATCHED IN ABSOLUTE AWE AT THE WHOLE PROCEEDING. IT WAS AS IF THE HAND OF A HIGHER POWER HAD LIFTED EVERYONE OUT OF HARM'S WAY—
"--AND WHO'S TO SAY THAT IT WASN'T, IN THE FORM OF ATHAIR UTILIZING POWERS EVEN NOW I SCARCELY COMPREHEND.
" TO SAY NOTHING OF KNUCKLES, WHO ALSO DISPLAYED SIGNS OF HAVING BEEN BLESSED WITH SOME FORM OF POWER.
" HOW ELSE TO EXPLAIN HIS MIRACULOUS RECOVERY FROM THAT WHICH OTHERS WOULD NOT HAVE SURVIVED ? "

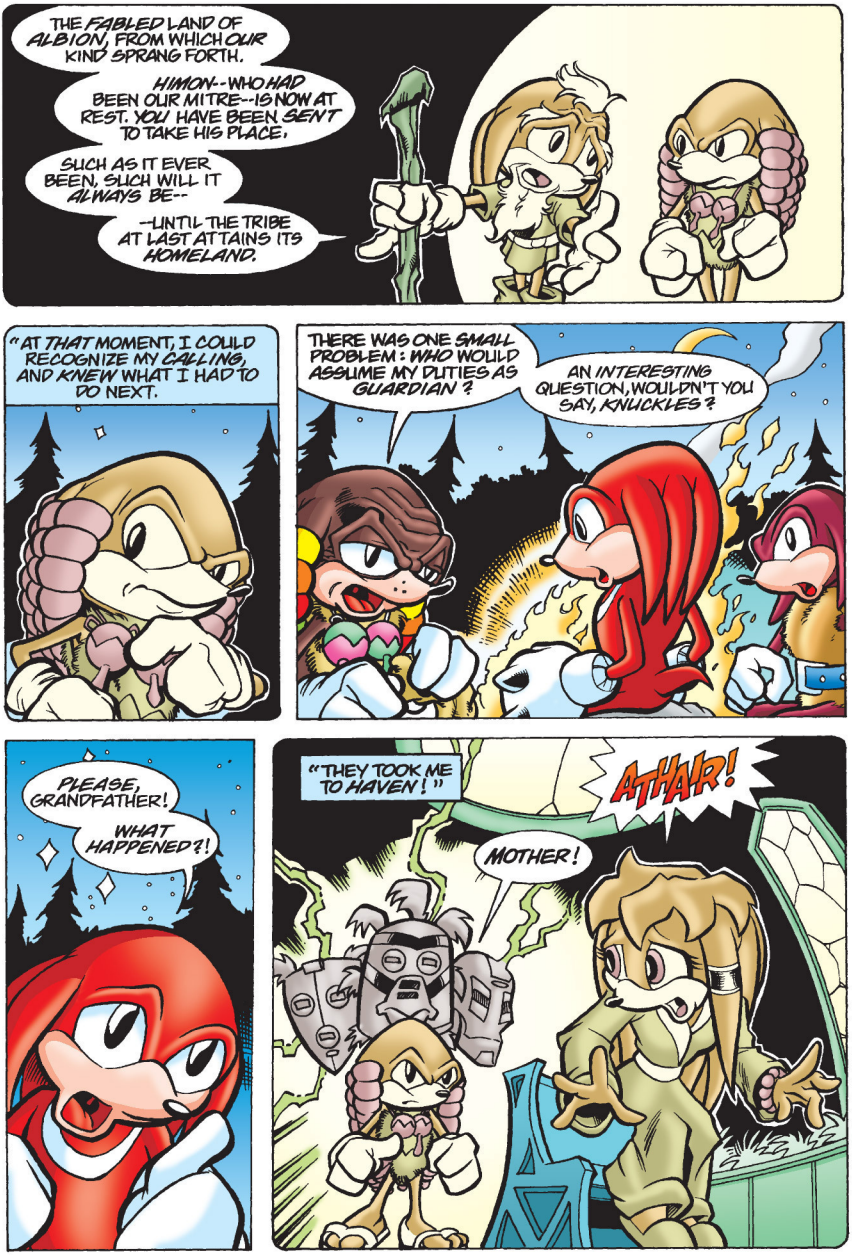

AH, THERE YOU ARE, GENTLEMEN! DO COME IN!
LOOKING A BIT UNDER THE WEATHER, ARE WE?
THE RAIN JUST SLACKED OFF, BUT NO WORSE FOR WEAR!
CHARMY SAID YOU WANTED TO SEE US!
I'VE RECEIVED WORD THAT KNUCKLES HAS LEFT THE FLOATING ISLAND ON A MISSION OF GREAT IMPORTANCE.
HE HAS?
LIKE WHERE DID HE SPLIT TO?
THAT DOES NOT CONCERN YOU!
WHAT DOES IS THAT YOU'VE BEEN DEPUTIZED TO ASSUME HIS DUTIES UNTIL HIS RETURN.
THERE'S MORE TO THIS THAN YOU'RE TELLING US, I'LL BET!
I'M TELLING YOU ALL I'M AUTHORIZED TO.
OH, ONE MORE THING--
--DESPITE MY RECOMMENDATION OTHERWISE--
--MEET YOUR NEW PARTNER!

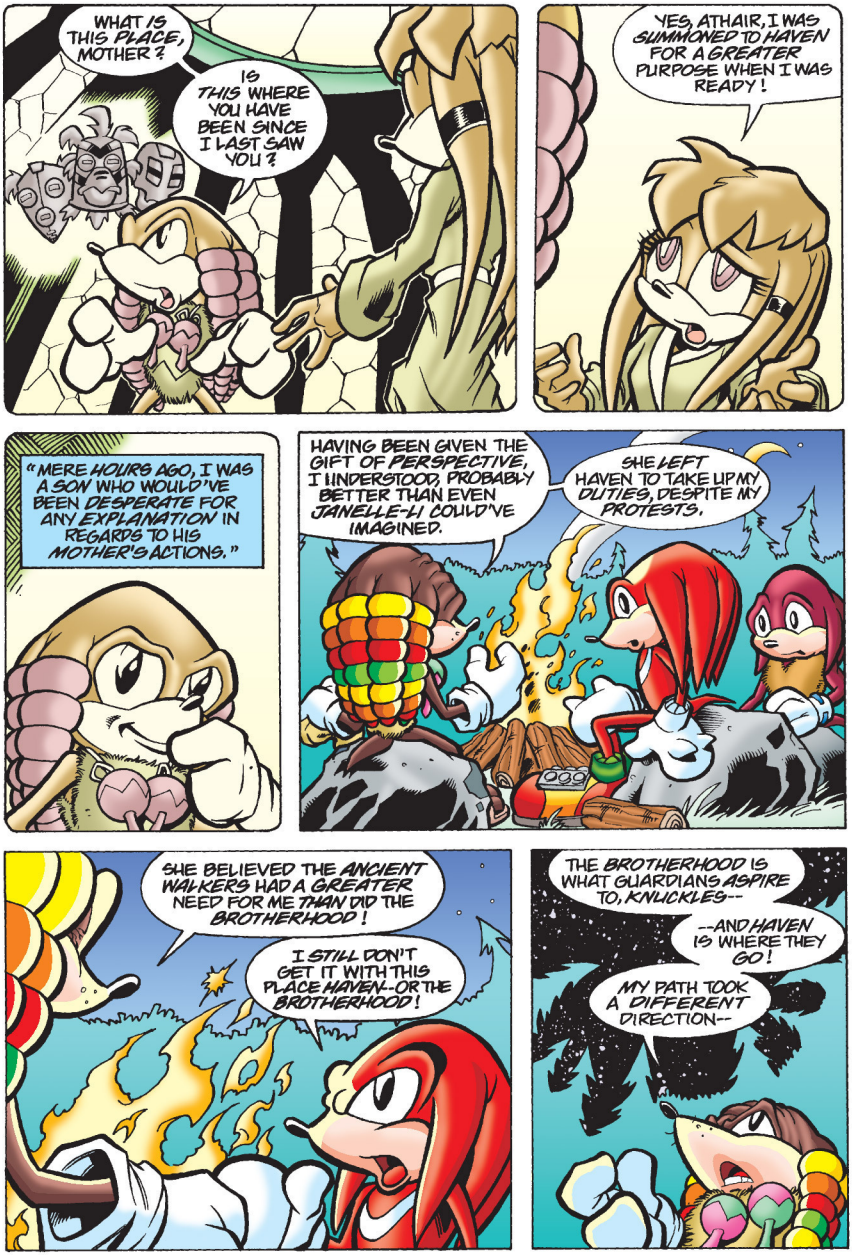

"WHO? HER?!!"
ARE WE THROUGH THE DAY OF FURY, BROTHER ATHAIR?
IT'S HARDLY BEGUN, YANAR! ALREADY STORM CLOUDS ARE FORMING ON THE HORIZON!
THIS IS BUT A MERE PROLOGUE!
WE SHOULD SAVOR THE MOMENT OF PEACE WHILE WE CAN.
AH, KNUCKLES, MY BOY! WHY DON'T YOU JOIN US?
THAT'S AN INVITATION YOU MAY COME TO REGRET, GRANDFATHER!
DO I DETECT A NOTE OF HOSTILITY, BROTHER KNUCKLES?
IT'S ALRIGHT, YANAR! IF ANYTHING, I'D EXPECT YOU TO BE MORE SYMPATHETIC TO MY GREAT-GRANDSON!
YOU'RE BOTH WANDERERS IN A SEARCH FOR KNOWLEDGE!
I'VE ONLY ONE QUESTION FOR YOU, GRANDFATHER ATHAIR!
JUST ONE?
JUST ONE!
WHY DID YOU ABANDON YOUR DUTIES AS A GUARDIAN?

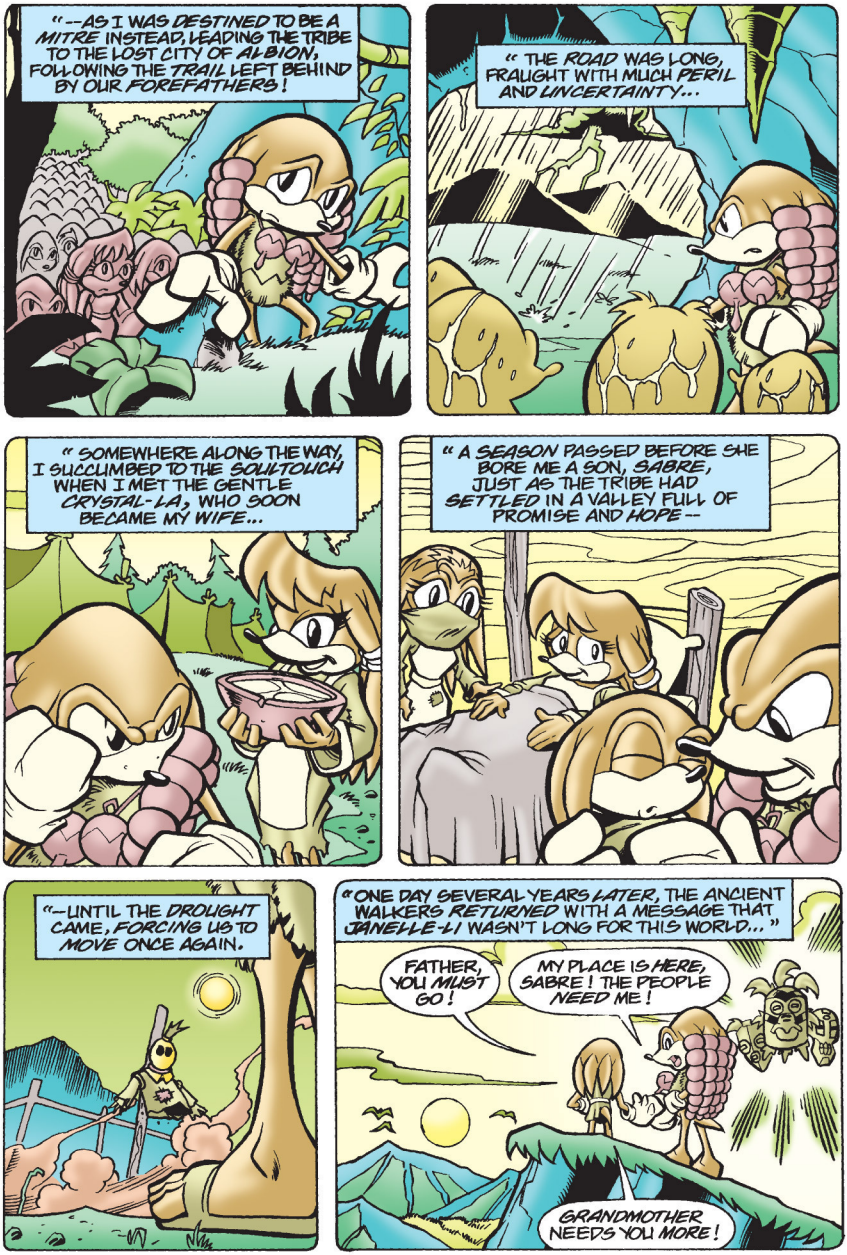

A FAIR QUESTION, SON--
--AS WELL AS A PERCEPTIVE ONE!
I SEE YOU ARE LEARNING, KNUCKLES!
I SUSPECT MY YOUTH WAS VERY MUCH LIKE YOURS GROWING UP ON THE FLOATING ISLAND!
"MY FATHER HAD DIED WHEN I WAS BUT AN INFANT, WHILE MY MOTHER WAS THE GUARDIAN DURING THAT PERIOD.
"I'D ACCOMPANY MY MOTHER, JANELLE-LI, THROUGHOUT THE ISLAND AS SHE'D RESTORE ORDER TO WHATEVER MATTER NEEDING ATTENTION.
"LITTLE DID I DREAM SHE WAS PREPARING ME TO ASSUME HER MANTLE.
"IMAGINE MY SURPRISE--
"--WHEN I ACCOMPANIED HER TO THE EDGE OF THE FORBIDDEN ZONE--
"--AND WATCHED HER VANISH INTO A WALL OF FLAME."

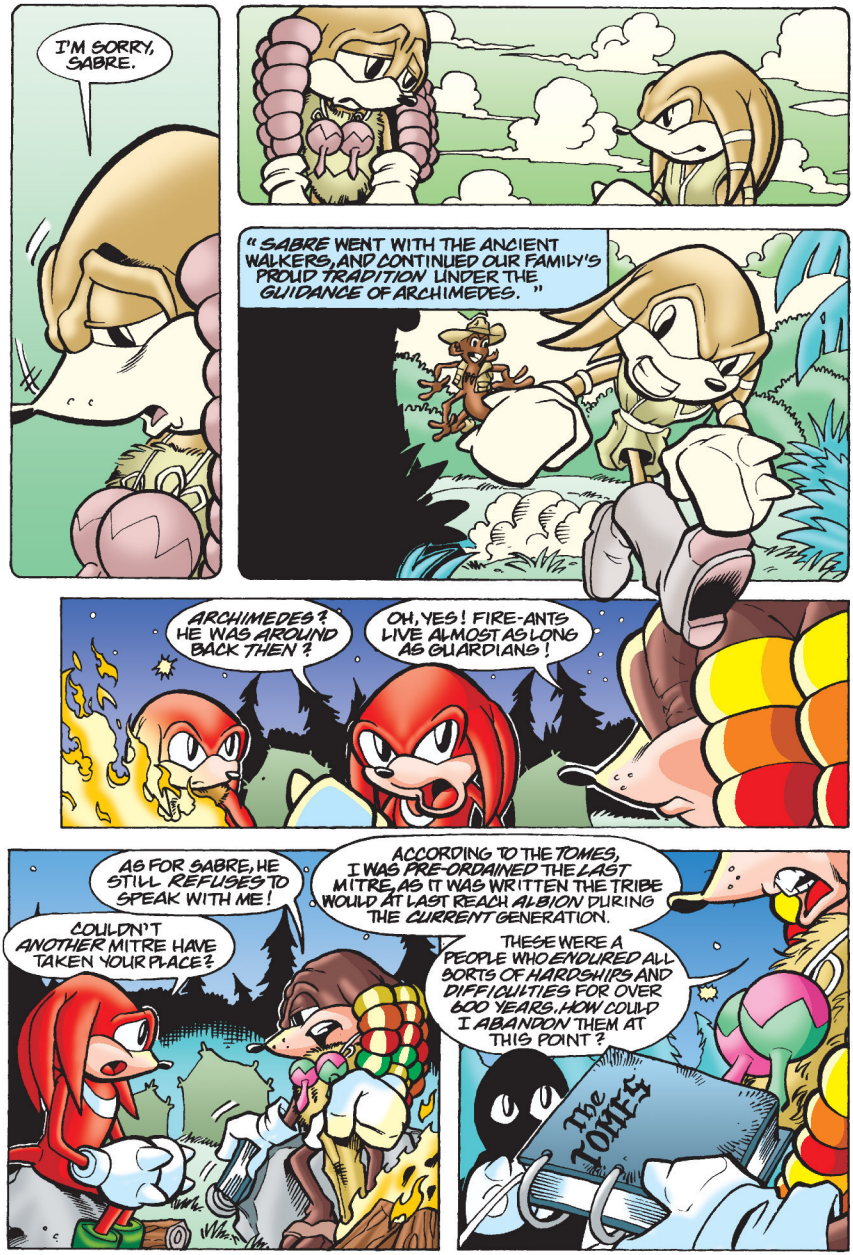

HEY! DEJA VU!
DO ALL GUARDIANS EXPERIENCE THIS ROUTINE OR WHAT?
MOST HAVE, BUT THAT'S ANOTHER STORY!
AS I WAS SAYING--
"JANELLE-LI HAD NOW LEFT ME IN CHARGE, AND I HANDLED MY RESPONSIBILITIES AS WELL AS ANY GUARDIAN BEFORE OR SINCE!
"JUST LIKE YOU, I HAD MANY QUESTIONS--
"--BUT UNLIKE YOU, I HAD FAITH I WOULD FIND MY ANSWERS IN DUE TIME--
"--WHICH CAME IN THE FORM OF A TRIO OF COSMIC BEINGS KNOWN AS THE ANCIENT WALKERS.
Young Athair, while the need for thou on the Floating Island be great-- greater still is the need for you elsewhere!"
"EVEN THOUGH I HAD BEEN TO ECHIDNAOPOLIS A FEW TIMES AS A BOY, IT STILL HAD NOT PREPARED ME FOR THE SIGHT THAT I FOUND--
MY OWN KIND!! LIVING ON THE MOBIAN SURFACE!!!

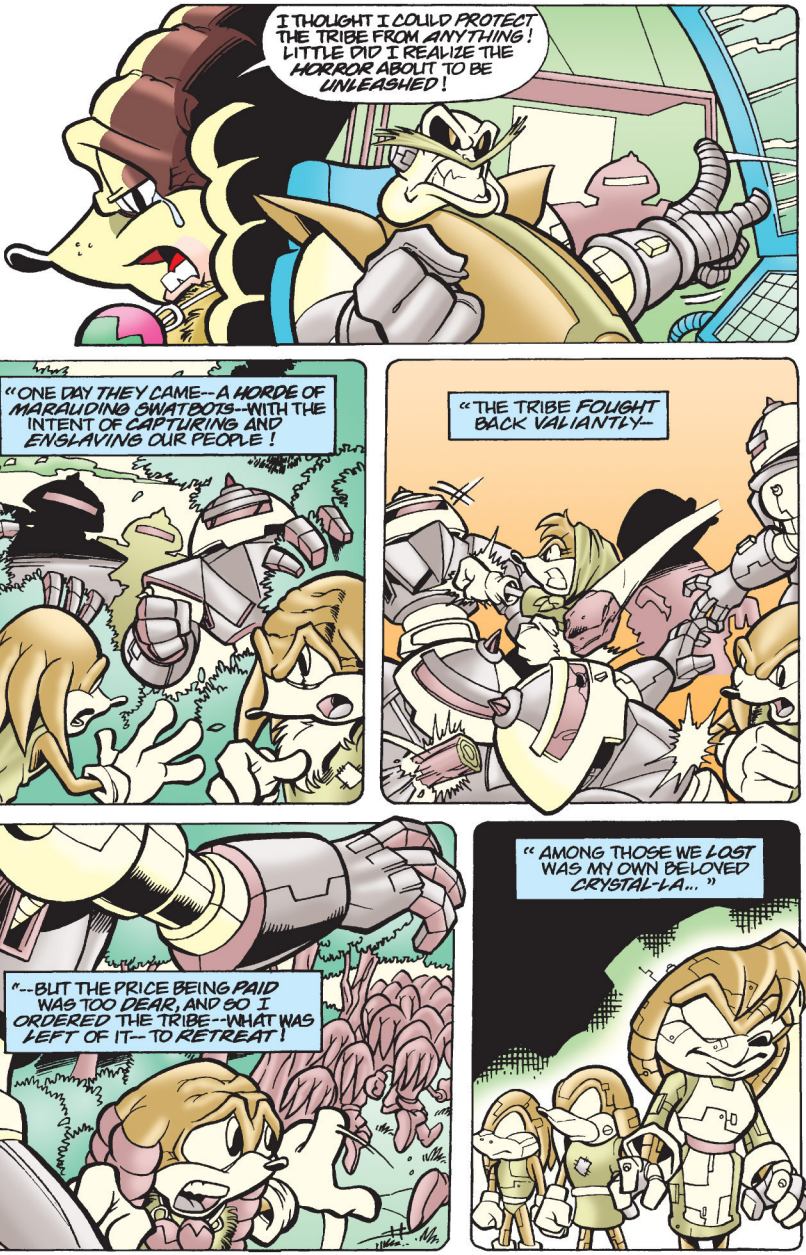

"UPON GETTING OVER MY INITIAL REACTION, I BEGAN TO NOTICE THAT THEY WERE ASSEMBLING IN A VERY REVERENT MANNER!
"I DIDN'T KNOW WHY AT THE TIME, BUT I FELT COMPELLED TO STEP FORWARD!
YOU ARE THE OTHER?
NO, I DON'T BELIEVE SO.
THEN YOU MUST BE THE MITRE!
THE WHAT?
OUR GUIDE--THE ONE SHOWING US THE WAY TO JOURNEY'S END.
AND WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO FIND?

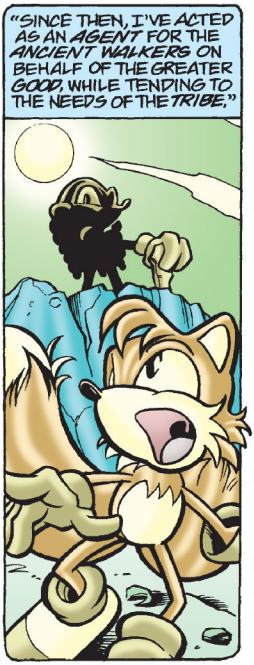

THE FABLED LAND OF ALBION, FROM WHICH OUR KIND SPRANG FORTH.
HIMON--WHO HAD BEEN OUR MITRE--IS NOW AT REST. YOU HAVE BEEN SENT TO TAKE HIS PLACE.
SUCH AS IT EVER BEEN, SUCH WILL IT ALWAYS BE--
--UNTIL THE TRIBE AT LAST ATTAINS ITS HOMELAND.
"AT THAT MOMENT, I COULD RECOGNIZE MY CALLING, AND KNEW WHAT I HAD TO DO NEXT.
THERE WAS ONE SMALL PROBLEM: WHO WOULD ASSUME MY DUTIES AS GUARDIAN?
AN INTERESTING QUESTION, WOULDN'T YOU SAY, KNUCKLES?
PLEASE, GRANDFATHER!
WHAT HAPPENED?!
"THEY TOOK ME TO HAVEN!"
ATHAIR!
MOTHER!

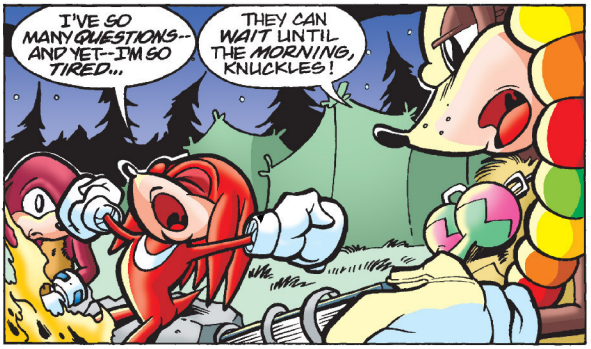

WHAT IS THIS PLACE, MOTHER?
IS THIS WHERE YOU HAVE BEEN SINCE I LAST SAW YOU?
YES, ATHAIR, I WAS SUMMONED TO HAVEN FOR A GREATER PURPOSE WHEN I WAS READY!
"MERE HOURS AGO, I WAS A SON WHO WOULD'VE BEEN DESPERATE FOR ANY EXPLANATION IN REGARDS TO HIS MOTHER'S ACTIONS."
HAVING BEEN GIVEN THE GIFT OF PERSPECTIVE, I UNDERSTOOD, PROBABLY BETTER THAN EVEN JANELLE-LI COULD'VE IMAGINED.
SHE LEFT HAVEN TO TAKE UP MY DUTIES, DESPITE MY PROTESTS.
SHE BELIEVED THE ANCIENT WALKERS HAD A GREATER NEED FOR ME THAN DID THE BROTHERHOOD!
I STILL DON'T GET IT WITH THIS PLACE HAVEN--OR THE BROTHERHOOD!
THE BROTHERHOOD IS WHAT GUARDIANS ASPIRE TO, KNUCKLES--
--AND HAVEN IS WHERE THEY GO!
MY PATH TOOK A DIFFERENT DIRECTION--


"--AS I WAS DESTINED TO BE A MITRE INSTEAD, LEADING THE TRIBE TO THE LOST CITY OF ALBION, FOLLOWING THE TRAIL LEFT BEHIND BY OUR FOREFATHERS!
"...THE ROAD WAS LONG, FRAUGHT WITH MUCH PERIL AND UNCERTAINTY...
"...SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY, I SUCCUMBED TO THE SOULTOUCH WHEN I MET THE GENTLE CRYSTAL-LA, WHO SOON BECAME MY WIFE...
"A SEASON PASSED BEFORE SHE BORE ME A SON, SABRE, JUST AS THE TRIBE HAD SETTLED IN A VALLEY FULL OF PROMISE AND HOPE--
"--UNTIL THE DROUGHT CAME, FORCING US TO MOVE ONCE AGAIN.
"ONE DAY SEVERAL YEARS LATER, THE ANCIENT WALKERS RETURNED WITH A MESSAGE THAT JANELLE-LI WASN'T LONG FOR THIS WORLD..."
FATHER, YOU MUST GO!
MY PLACE IS HERE, SABRE! THE PEOPLE NEED ME!
GRANDMOTHER NEEDS YOU MORE!

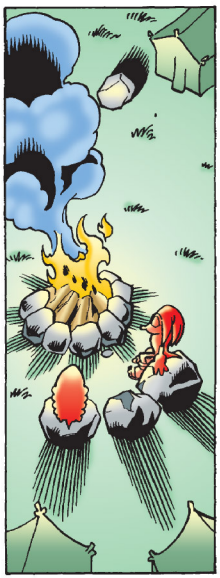

I'M SORRY, SABRE.
"SABRE WENT WITH THE ANCIENT WALKERS, AND CONTINUED OUR FAMILY'S PROUD TRADITION UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF ARCHIMEDES."
ARCHIMEDES? HE WAS AROUND BACK THEN?
OH, YES! FIRE-ANTS LIVE ALMOST AS LONG AS GUARDIANS!
AS FOR SABRE, HE STILL REFUSES TO SPEAK WITH ME!
COULDN'T ANOTHER MITRE HAVE TAKEN YOUR PLACE?
ACCORDING TO THE TOMES, I WAS PRE-ORDAINED THE LAST MITRE, AS IT WAS WRITTEN THE TRIBE WOULD AT LAST REACH ALBION DURING THE CURRENT GENERATION.
THESE WERE A PEOPLE WHO ENDURED ALL SORTS OF HARDSHIPS AND DIFFICULTIES FOR OVER 600 YEARS. HOW COULD I ABANDON THEM AT THIS POINT?
The TOMES

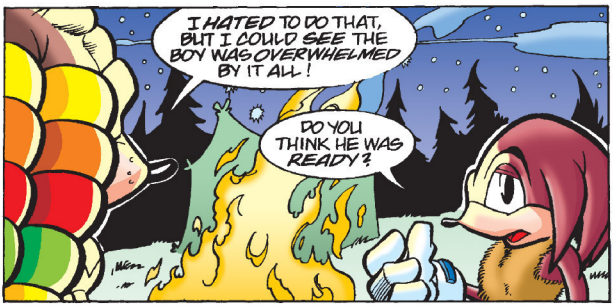

I THOUGHT I COULD PROTECT THE TRIBE FROM ANYTHING! LITTLE DID I REALIZE THE HORROR ABOUT TO BE UNLEASHED!
"ONE DAY THEY CAME--A HORDE OF MARAUDING SWATBOTS--WITH THE INTENT OF CAPTURING AND ENSLAVING OUR PEOPLE!
"THE TRIBE FOUGHT BACK VALIANTLY--
"--BUT THE PRICE BEING PAID WAS TOO DEAR, AND SO I ORDERED THE TRIBE--WHAT WAS LEFT OF IT--TO RETREAT!
"AMONG THOSE WE LOST WAS MY OWN BELOVED CRYSTAL-LA... "

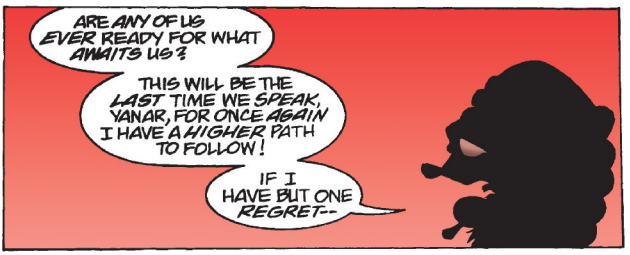

"SINCE THEN, I'VE ACTED AS AN AGENT FOR THE ANCIENT WALKERS ON BEHALF OF THE GREATER GOOD, WHILE TENDING TO THE NEEDS OF THE TRIBE,"

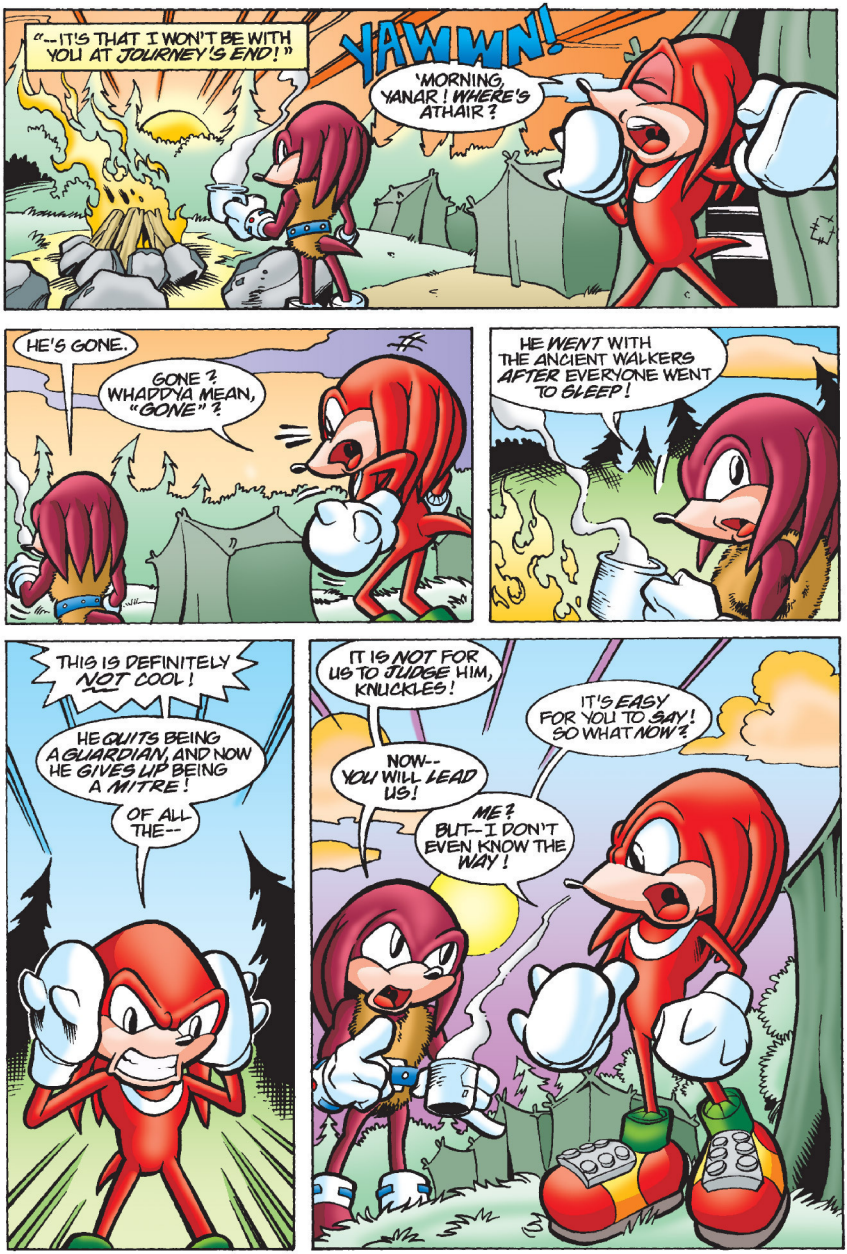

I'VE SO MANY QUESTIONS-- AND YET--I'M SO TIRED...
THEY CAN WAIT UNTIL THE MORNING, KNUCKLES!

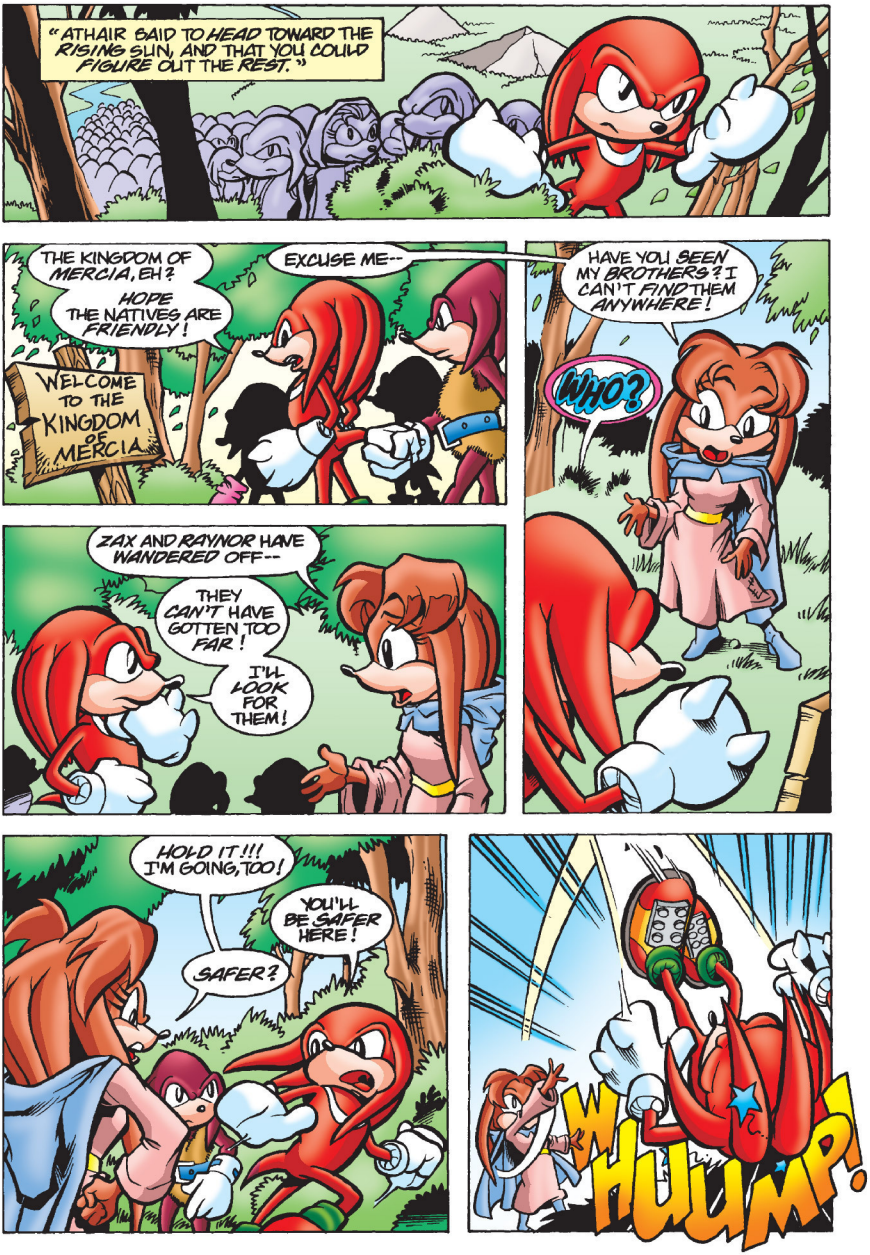
I GUESS I'LL CALL IT A NIGHT THEN!
SLEEP WELL, KNUCKLES!

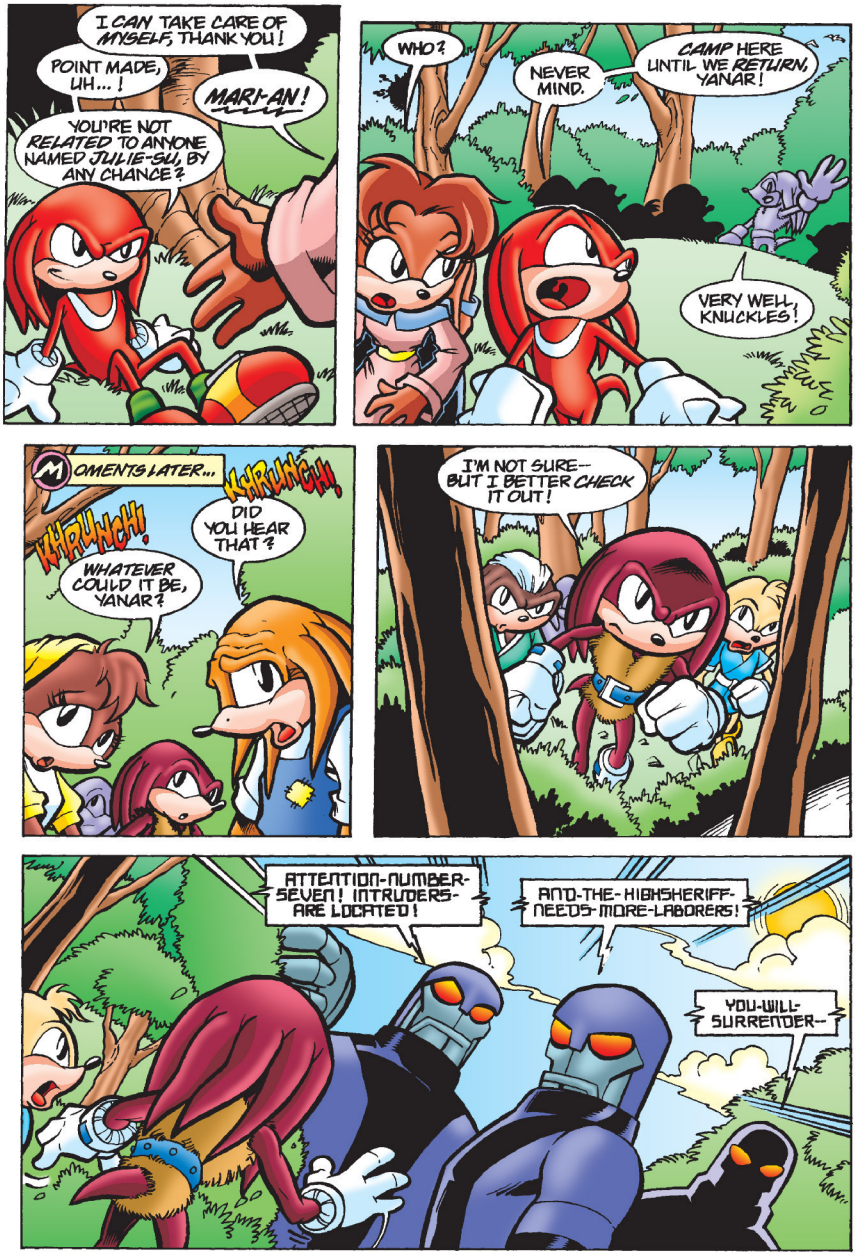


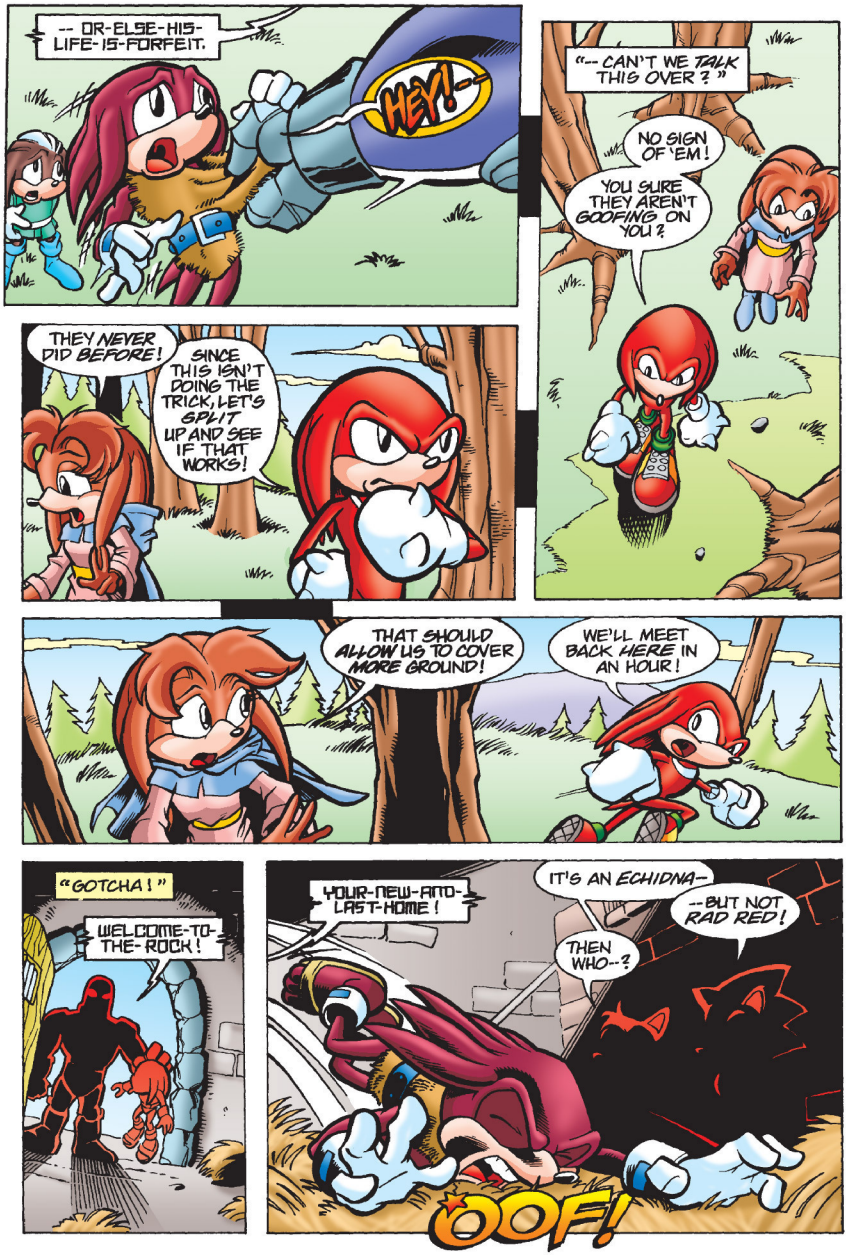

I HATED TO DO THAT, BUT I COULD SEE THE BOY WAS OVERWHELMED BY IT ALL!
DO YOU THINK HE WAS READY?

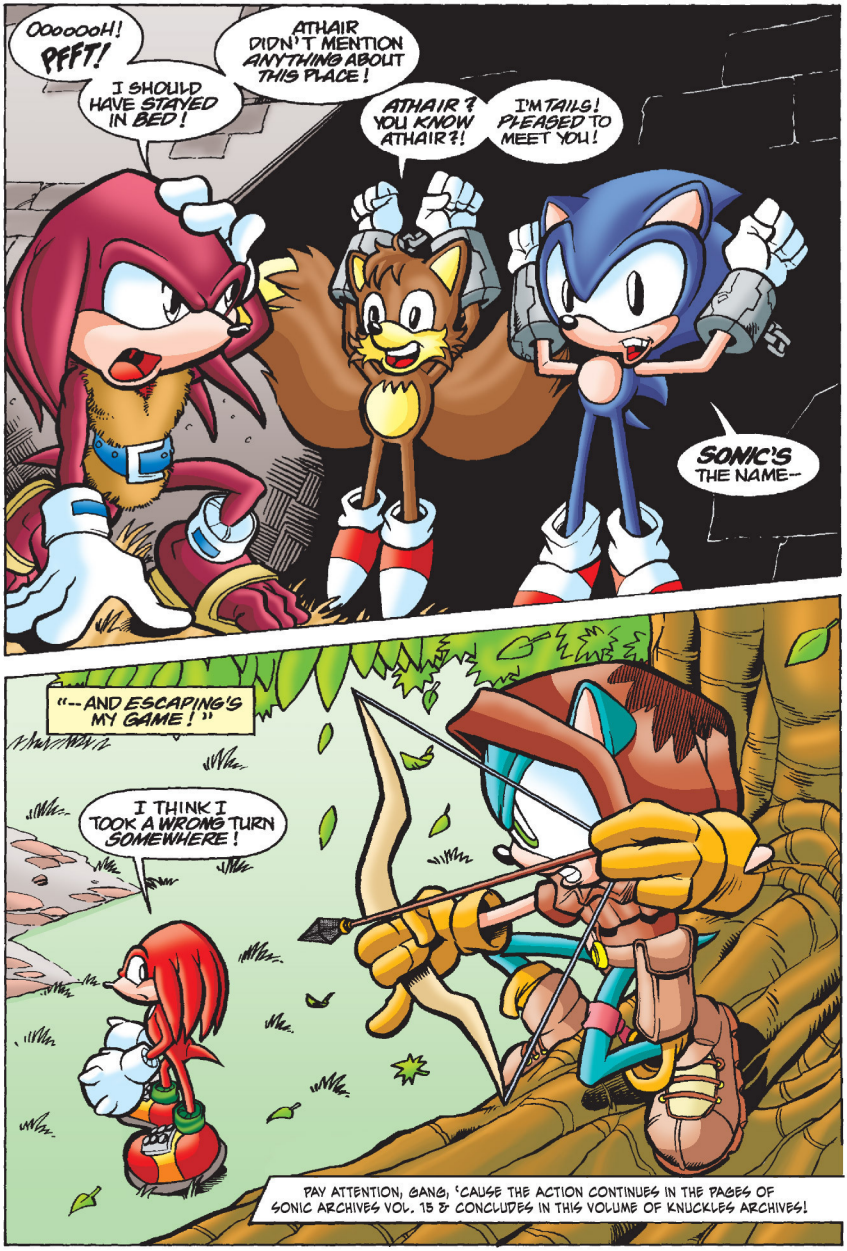

ARE ANY OF US EVER READY FOR WHAT AWAITS US?
THIS WILL BE THE LAST TIME WE SPEAK, YANAR, FOR ONCE AGAIN I HAVE A HIGHER PATH TO FOLLOW!
IF I HAVE BUT ONE REGRET--


"--IT'S THAT I WON'T BE WITH YOU AT JOURNEY'S END!"
YAWWN!
'MORNING, YANAR! WHERE'S ATHAIR?
HE'S GONE.
GONE? WHADDYA MEAN, "GONE"?
HE WENT WITH THE ANCIENT WALKERS AFTER EVERYONE WENT TO SLEEP!
THIS IS DEFINITELY NOT COOL!
HE QUITS BEING A GUARDIAN, AND NOW HE GIVES UP BEING A MITRE!
OF ALL THE--
IT IS NOT FOR US TO JUDGE HIM, KNUCKLES!
NOW-- YOU WILL LEAD US!
ME? BUT-- I DON'T EVEN KNOW THE WAY!
IT'S EASY FOR YOU TO SAY! SO WHAT NOW?


"ATHAIR SAID TO HEAD TOWARD THE RISING SUN, AND THAT YOU COULD FIGURE OUT THE REST."
THE KINGDOM OF MERCIA, EH?
HOPE THE NATIVES ARE FRIENDLY!
EXCUSE ME--
WELCOME TO THE KINGDOM OF MERCIA
HAVE YOU SEEN MY BROTHERS? I CAN'T FIND THEM ANYWHERE!
WHO?
ZAX AND RAYNOR HAVE WANDERED OFF--
THEY CAN'T HAVE GOTTEN TOO FAR!
I'LL LOOK FOR THEM!
HOLD IT!!! I'M GOING, TOO!
YOU'LL BE SAFER HERE!
SAFER?
WHUUMP!


I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF, THANK YOU!
POINT MADE, UH... !
MARI-AN!
YOU'RE NOT RELATED TO ANYONE NAMED JULIE-SU, BY ANY CHANCE?
WHO?
NEVER MIND.
CAMP HERE UNTIL WE RETURN, YANAR!
VERY WELL, KNUCKLES!
MOMENTS LATER...
KYRUNCH!
KYRUNCH!
DID YOU HEAR THAT?
WHATEVER COULD IT BE, YANAR?
I'M NOT SURE-- BUT I BETTER CHECK IT OUT!
ATTENTION-NUMBER-SEVEN! INTRUDERS-ARE LOCATED!
AND-THE-HIGHSHERIFF-NEEDS-MORE-LABORERS!
YOU-WILL-SURRENDER--


-- OR-ELSE-HIS-LIFE-IS-FORFEIT.
HEY!
"-- CAN'T WE TALK THIS OVER? "
NO SIGN OF 'EM!
YOU SURE THEY AREN'T GOOFING ON YOU?
THEY NEVER DID BEFORE!
SINCE THIS ISN'T DOING THE TRICK, LET'S SPLIT UP AND SEE IF THAT WORKS!
THAT SHOULD ALLOW US TO COVER MORE GROUND!
WE'LL MEET BACK HERE IN AN HOUR!
"GOTCHA!"
WELCOME-TO-THE-ROCK!
YOUR-NEW-AND-LAST-HOME!
IT'S AN ECHIDNA--
--BUT NOT RAD RED!
THEN WHO--?
OOF!


OOOOOOH! PFFT!
I SHOULD HAVE STAYED IN BED!
ATHAIR DIDN'T MENTION ANYTHING ABOUT THIS PLACE!
ATHAIR? YOU KNOW ATHAIR?!
I'M TAILS! PLEASED TO MEET YOU!
SONIC'S THE NAME--
"--AND ESCAPING'S MY GAME!"
I THINK I TOOK A WRONG TURN SOMEWHERE!
PAY ATTENTION, GANG, 'CAUSE THE ACTION CONTINUES IN THE PAGES OF SONIC ARCHIVES VOL. 15 & CONCLUDES IN THIS VOLUME OF KNUCKLES ARCHIVES!